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Union League Club
(New York, N.Y.)

Report of Committee on
Political Reform...

[New York]

[1921]

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...Report of committee on political reform submitted at a special meeting of the club held Thursday evening, October 6th, 1921, on the municipal campaign... [New York, 1921]

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THE UNION LEAGUE CLUB OF NEW YORK

Report of Committee on Political Reform
submitted at a

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CLUB HELD THURSDAY EVENING,

OCTOBER 6TH, 1921,

ON

THE MUNICIPAL CAMPAIGN.

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Box 100

The Fourth Article of Association of the Club adopted in January, 1866, expressly states that it shall be its duty to resist and expose corruption and promote reform not only in national and state but in municipal affairs. Indeed, it was principally for the very purpose of carrying out the spirit of this duty with respect to municipal affairs that the Committee on Political Reform of the Club was created in June, 1871, as one of the standing committees, to the end, as the resolution establishing it set forth, that "efficient, systematic and persistent steps be taken under the direction of that committee to perform the duties imposed by Article Fourth." In September of the same year, it was among other things declared that in the judgment of the Club party distinctions should be disregarded "so far as our municipal reform and government are concerned," that there should be "a return to strict accountability and to honesty, and a cessation of the iniquitous wastefulness diffused throughout our city government as far and as fast as possible," and that the Club should tender to the then non-partisan Committee of Seventy, which was conducting the municipal campaign of 1871, "its aid and assistance in any manner in which it can be made available."

The Club is now called upon again to face the eternal problem of municipal government and to perform the duty imposed by its constitution, and it is for us to determine what, if any, part we shall take and what, if any, aid and assistance we shall tender in the pending municipal campaign which is to fix the character of the government of the Greater City of New York for the next four years.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the far-reaching importance of the issues of good government and efficient and honest administration at stake in the coming election, for they affect the future welfare, security, living conditions and morals of a population of nearly 6,000,000 souls, more than twice the number of the inhabitants of the whole country in 1789 when Washington was inaugurated in the city as the first President of the United States. The population thus directly and vitally affected in their daily lives and happiness is larger than that of any of forty-four of the sovereign States of the Union at the present time, and larger than that of many independent nations. Moreover, the governmental power of the Mayor of the Greater City of New York and his colleagues is greater and far more comprehensive than that vested in any other official or even Governor of a State, or in the heads of most of the national governments of the world. Hence the necessity in a high degree of competency, efficiency, integrity and civic spirit in a nominee for such an office.

It seems to your committee that at no time since the crisis of 1871 has it been more clearly and emphatically the duty of the Club to take part in a municipal campaign and coöperate to the utmost with other organizations in securing for the Greater City an efficient, economical,

constructive and progressive administration. In the coming new term of four years, incalculable and long-enduring injury can be done by an incompetent, obstructive and reactionary administration of our municipal government.

The necessity for change in past methods, for the introduction of economy and efficiency, and for thorough comprehension of the great problems involved in the management of our municipal affairs will be, perhaps, more readily appreciated by those who have not closely followed recent municipal developments if they will ponder the statistics and study the lesson of the danger of drifting into bankruptcy which they teach. For purposes of ready comparison, the budget figures of the first year of consolidation into the Greater City of New York, namely, 1899, will be set up against those for the present year, 1921. These figures, it is submitted, show an alarming growth of debt and of all forms of municipal expenditure.

DEBT AND ASSESSED VALUATION.

In 1899, the net debt of the Greater City	
of New York was.....	\$256,850,000
In 1921, it was.....	1,137,700,000

An increase of.....	\$880,850,000
or 342.9 per cent. in twenty-two years.	

The assessed value of real and personal property, in 1899, if corrected to 100 per cent. of the valuation, as is now the practice, would have been \$5,182,000,000; it is now \$10,186,200,000 for 1921, an increase of \$5,004,200,000, or 96.2 per cent. The figures published last week, which are to be those on the tax books for 1922, are

\$10,614,800,000, or an increase of valuations in the amount of \$428,600,000 over the figures of 1921.

The annual debt service, that is to say, the interest and instalments of principal payable upon outstanding corporate stock and bonds, which in 1899 was \$23,500,000, was \$107,200,000 in 1921, an increase of \$83,700,000 per annum, or 356.6 per cent.

ANNUAL BUDGET FOR PROPOSED EXPENDITURES.

In 1899, the budget total for proposed expenditures, including docks not then in the budget as voted, was.....	\$95,900,000
In 1921, it was.....	365,500,000

An increase of.....	\$269,600,000
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or 279 per cent.

The increases include large additions to the expenditures of each of the principal city departments; for example, the Department of Education, the Police Department, the Fire Department and the Health Department. It is surely our duty to investigate in each case in order to ascertain whether the increase is or is not larger than any legitimate increase in salaries or cost of supplies or materials.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The budget figures for the maintenance of the Department of Education in 1899 were \$13,400,000 with 450,600 pupils, whilst the comparable figures in 1921 are \$75,500,000, with 904,600 children, without including \$7,000,000 of the \$27,000,000 in addition to the budget, which had to be informally authorized but was not legally

appropriated. In other words, with an increase of only 100 per cent. in the number of pupils, the expense of educating the children of the Greater City has increased 462.8 per cent.

It must further be borne in mind that notwithstanding this enormous and alarming increase in the cost of maintaining our public school system, the results are inadequate and unsatisfactory, and that it is estimated that fully 100,000 of the children of the Greater City are only able to have part time attendance. It should also be borne in mind that there are about 162,000 children now being educated without cost to the City in the Catholic parochial schools. The actual attendance in these parochial schools last June was 157,000 children, and although no statistics are available to show what such attendance is this month, it is estimated at more than 162,000.

POLICE DEPARTMENT.

In 1899, the budget total for the Police Department was \$11,180,000 with a force of 7,397 men; it was \$28,350,000 in 1921 with a force of 11,847. Although the population increased 74.6 per cent., or from 3,440,000 to 5,840,000, the force was increased only 60 per cent., but the cost of maintaining the department increased 153.6 per cent.

Notwithstanding the increase of the police force of the Greater City, it is notorious that there has been a constantly increasing failure to afford adequate protection against robbery, assaults, etc. An immense number of private watchmen and guards are now employed by taxpayers to supply the protection which the police ought to afford. The recent exposures made by the

Meyer Legislative Committee show that in the one matter of policing the docks of the City, on which its immense commerce depends, millions of dollars—at times as high as \$100,000 per day or at the rate of \$36,500,000 per annum—have been paid by private individuals or corporations for protection against thieves and rioters. Everywhere business houses and private residences are now protected by the employment of private watchmen to render a service which in other cities and other countries is largely rendered by the police. Statistics showing the extent of this forced employment of private watchmen throughout the Greater City are not available, but the expense must be enormous and add materially to the cost of doing business and of living in the City—an expense which could be in great measure avoided if the community had adequate police protection.

FIRE DEPARTMENT.

The Fire Department in 1899 was allotted \$4,400,000, as against \$17,000,000 in 1921, an increase of \$12,600,000, or 283.3 per cent., and the force has been increased 141.4 per cent. from 2,839 in 1899 to 6,853 in 1921, of whom 800 have been recently added in order to provide for the two-platoon system.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

The budget for the Health Department was \$1,100,000 in 1899; and \$5,600,000 in 1921, an increase of \$4,500,000, or 409.6 per cent. This equals an increase in the rate per capita of over 203 per cent. Here as elsewhere the vast growth is stated to show the size of the complicated problem and to emphasize the duty of all citizens to get

full money's worth for huge sums, however necessary, and to resist undesirable increases by either state or local action. Undoubtedly much of the increase in the Health Department has been due to conditions beyond the control of city officials, such as the war and mandatory legislation.

INCREASE PERCENTAGES.

Although responsibility for increases in the cost of the city government since consolidation must be distributed over the twenty-two years, the following figures will show the share of the total percentage increases since consolidation which have occurred during the Hyman administration:

Budget total	56.2%
Budget total per capita	60.0%
Budget total per \$1000 of the valuation	65.4%
Operating cost per \$1000 of valuation	72.7%
Operating cost less schools	62.2%
Operating cost per capita less schools	73.9%
Police budget	59.2%
Police budget per capita	79.8%
Fire budget	62.4%
Fire budget per capita	68.8%
Fire budget per \$1000 valuation	76.4%
Health budget	51.2%
School budget per capita	52.6%
School budget per \$1000 valuation	54.8%
Debt service	38.8%

The following are typical of the larger percentage increases for the year 1921 over the last year of the Mitchell administration in 1917:

While the population has increased	15.2%
Budget total has increased	73.0%
Budget per capita	49.9%

Budget per \$1000 valuation	47.7%
Operation budget, City only	75.1%
Operation budget per capita	51.7%
Operation budget per \$1000 valuation	49.2%
Operation budget for the city, less schools	71.8%
Debt service	43.7%
Police service	55.6%
Fire budget	86.7%
Health budget	72.7%
School	82.5%

Competent experts have estimated for your committee that the budget of the Greater City will probably average \$400,000,000 per annum during the coming four years, that is to say, a total of \$1,600,000,000, which will have to be raised by taxation and expended under the administration to be elected next month. In addition, they estimate that the Greater City will have to increase its debt (provided it can increase its borrowing power) by from \$200,000,000 to \$400,000,000 for new school buildings, imperatively needed sewers, new docks, settlement of the West Side improvement, projected terminal construction, etc., etc.

PROPERTY INTERESTS OF THE GREATER CITY.

The property owned and maintained by the Greater City was valued at \$1,948,700,000 for this year. It must be obvious that the management of this vast property presents one of the most difficult and complex problems and calls for the highest type of competent expert service and of financial and executive ability. Official reports indicate that the number of regular employees upon the Greater City's payroll now exceeds 80,000, including the members of the Police and Fire Departments and

the educational employees. This is an army in itself. Of course, without competent and expert direction and supervision and necessary discipline such a mass of employees is reasonably certain to be inefficient and wasteful. The business of no private corporation in the country is anything like as complicated, or as difficult to conduct.

The above figures have been thus briefly analyzed for the purpose of bringing home to all and making as impressive as possible the alarming increase in the debt and cost of our municipal government and the imperative necessity of an economical as well as an efficient administration if we are to avoid oppressive and confiscatory taxation and ultimate bankruptcy. Excessive taxes are certain to drive business and investments from the City, to increase the rents of all classes of tenants, and to injure almost every one in the community.

THE TRANSIT PROBLEM.

One of the most important of the questions to be dealt with and, it is hoped, solved by the new administration, will be the Transit Problem. It presents an extremely difficult and complicated problem, and in its handling requires the highest order of financial and executive ability. It obviously calls for the services of expert administrators. Yet the only ability shown by the present administration has been that of obstruction. The Greater City has already invested \$287,000,000 in the Subway System, for which it has issued bonds, and it is now paying thereon nearly \$10,000,000 a year in interest and sinking fund requirements. This investment, under existing conditions, is earning no interest; but if it could be rendered

interest-bearing, it would add at once an equivalent amount of principal, viz., \$287,000,000, to the borrowing capacity of the Greater City, and enable it promptly to raise the funds pressingly needed for necessary schools and extensions of our present transit system.

The problem is fundamentally a business one. If on a five-cent fare the transit lines can be safely and efficiently operated and provide a fair and just return on the actual value of the property devoted to public use, this must, of course, be insisted upon; but if this be practically impossible because of largely increased cost of operation and maintenance, it is little short of fraudulent to attempt to delude the public with the notion that in one way or another the City itself can do what the present managers would be unable to do.

The Transit Commission appointed by the Governor to solve the transit problem in the Greater City of New York has made a preliminary report setting forth the actual situation and the general lines upon which it proposes to deal with the problem. The three commissioners are men of large experience, of recognized ability and integrity, and of undoubted devotion to the public interests. No one can fairly challenge their honesty of purpose or their determination to preserve a five-cent fare, if at all feasible. Every candid, disinterested and fair-minded person reading the preliminary report must agree that the Commission is endeavoring conscientiously to protect the best interests of the people of the Greater City. The Commission is entitled to receive the support and help of all good citizens in working out the complicated and difficult problems before it. As in all problems of government, differences of opinion may arise in regard to the

best methods of reaching the desired ends; but it behooves all fair-minded citizens who do not agree with the Commission upon any particular point to offer constructive suggestions and to cooperate with the Commission in endeavoring to secure a better solution, if one can be found. It is neither fair to the Commission nor the part of good citizenship to offer carping or merely destructive criticism without suggesting any practical substitute for the plan they have proposed. Your committee is confident that Chairman McAneny and his associates can be relied on to protect the interests of the people and to secure for the Greater City the very best terms practicable. At any rate, in common fairness, we should await the public hearings and the discussion of objections. If a better plan can then be suggested than that outlined by the Commission, there can be no reasonable doubt that it will be adopted.

For example, if the valuation of the private street railways and the determination of which lines shall be included in the proposed re-organization seem a power and duty which should not be left entirely to a state-appointed commission, the Transit Commission might welcome a suggestion from the City that these questions be referred to a board representing both the Board of Estimate of the Greater City and the Transit Commission in some such way as is proposed for the management of the new operating corporations. The proposed board of control might be given power and responsibility before rather than only after the valuations have been fixed and the system organized. If one year seems too short a time for a thorough test of the five-cent fare rate, the Transit Commission may determine to fix a longer period.

But it must be manifest that only good to the whole Greater City can result from having the representatives of the Greater City at least endeavor in good faith to coöperate with the Commission, or else submit a superior plan for public study and decision.

MAYOR HYLAN'S ADMINISTRATION.

In the judgment of your committee, the administration of Mayor Hylan has been inefficient and wasteful in many respects and pitiable in some. Whilst the Mayor has been personally honest, he has shown in many ways infirmities of temper and temperament, ignorance of departmental operations, and an incapacity to grasp and solve the complex and difficult problems which should be understood and competently determined by the head of our municipal government. His training prior to 1917 had unfortunately in no way qualified him for the performance of the most difficult and arduous duties which any public officer in our State is called upon to perform, and the record of the past four years affords no reasonable ground for any hope of material improvement. The recent disclosures demonstrate that he is compelled to rely for the most elemental features of administration upon colleagues and subordinates. Appointees of these subordinates have been found in many instances to be untrustworthy; and this was inevitable in view of the character of many of these appointees selected solely for political reasons. The baneful influences of Tammany Hall and what is known as Hearstism have affected almost all departments of the Greater City, and numerous appointments have been made without regard to practical experience or ability to serve the best interests of

the community. Tested by the showing of the past three years and nine months, all unprejudiced observers must be profoundly convinced that the reëlection of Mayor Hylan would mean the continuance of the present incapacity in dealing with many of the difficult problems which the new administration will have to face and solve.

COALITION NOMINEES.

Your committee believes that Major Henry H. Curran, the nominee selected by the Coalition Committee for Mayor of the Greater City, will, if elected, prove to be a satisfactory and competent executive. Through practical training, he has made himself familiar with our municipal affairs, and his experience and talents qualify him for the difficult executive and administrative work of the office of Mayor. His public career is undoubtedly familiar to all the members of the Club, and it is most encouraging. He has shown high character, absolute independence and integrity, intellectual and moral courage, executive ability as well as industry, vigor and effectiveness in administration, and unselfish devotion to public and patriotic service. In actual service and performance in high public office during the period of the past ten years, he has been tried and found not wanting. Every test which enables us to judge of the competency, expertness and character of candidates for such an important public office as Mayor of the Greater City of New York, would seem to assure an efficient, economical and progressive administration under Major Curran, if elected.

So, likewise, as to State Senator Charles C. Lockwood, selected as the Coalition nominee for Comptroller of the Greater City. No one familiar with state and city affairs during the past eight years can doubt his industry and

vigor, his constructive statesmanship, and his capacity for grasping and handling complicated financial problems. Trained under such distinguished jurists as the late Supreme Court Justice Jasper W. Gilbert and the present Justice Henry D. Hotchkiss, Senator Lockwood early showed scholarship and ability of a high order, which should enable him to discharge the duties of the important office of City Comptroller. This office is so vitally important in our system of municipal government that the coöperation of a capable and trustworthy Comptroller with the Mayor has become essential to the due and satisfactory administration of the affairs of the City, and, if he is to be elected Mayor of the Greater City, Major Curran should have the assistance and coöperation of Senator Lockwood as Comptroller. This is necessary to guarantee that the policies of the new administration shall be carried into practical effect. From the Comptroller no less than from the Mayor should be expected constructive statesmanship and courage of a high order. Moreover, the time has come for greater attention by this office to the practical results of city expenditures. It is no longer sufficient merely to verify vouchers or requisitions, or to balance books. Efficiency and results as well as legality and honesty ought to be regularly audited in order that the public may ascertain whether or not the Greater City is getting value for the vast sums it raises by taxation.

The candidacy of Vincent Gilroy for the office of President of the Board of Aldermen is equally important. The new Mayor and Comptroller must have the coöperation of the President of the Board of Aldermen if only for the voting power of the latter in the Board

of Estimate. No greater folly could be committed than to elect a competent and reliable Mayor and a competent and reliable Comptroller and expose their policies to be paralyzed or defeated at the hands of a Tammany President of the Board of Aldermen.

In Mr. Gilroy, we have fortunately a well-trained, a scholarly and an eloquent lawyer, of high ideals of public service, well-informed as to legislative practice from having served in the state legislature, and familiar with the problems of the Greater City. He is a Democrat who believes in the national principles of his party, but who refuses to sacrifice the best interests and the future welfare and happiness of the Greater City in order to promote the interests of the present Tammany "Organization." His principles in municipal affairs are said to be those of that great Democrat, Samuel J. Tilden, who fifty years ago led his party, in coöperation with Republicans, in the revolt against Tammany Hall and the repellent Murphyism of those days.

DISTRICT ATTORNEYSHIP.

The office of District Attorney for the County of New York is indisputably the most important county office in the State, the greatest prosecuting office in the country, and one of the largest and most important law offices in the world. It is essentially the Department of Justice of the county, and much higher in its requirements of ability and character than even the office of Corporation Counsel, whose duties extend over the entire Greater City.

The best work of any municipal administration of the Greater City can be nullified by a hostile, inefficient, or dishonest District Attorney. The possibilities in the

District Attorney's office of corruption, of political manipulation, of favors to political friends, of punishment of political enemies, of laxity in prosecuting criminals, of dismissal of indictments because of pretended illegality or pretended lack of proof, of oppression and coercion of men and women, poor and rich alike, are simply boundless.

The District Attorney, although elected in the county, is a state officer, constantly exercising quasi-judicial functions, with the greatest power for good or evil. He represents or should properly represent the majesty of the law of the State. He should be scrupulously impartial, and ever endeavor to protect the innocent against unfounded charges as well as to punish the guilty. He should not seek victims because of malice or resentment or to serve political friends or private interests.

The staff of such an office ought to be composed of trained lawyers of ability and character. It consists of the District Attorney, at a salary of \$15,000 per annum, a first assistant at \$12,000, seven assistants at \$10,000 each, six assistants at \$7,500 each, and forty-one deputy assistants with salaries from \$2,400 to \$5,500 each. In addition there is a medical assistant, a chief clerk with two deputies, thirty other clerks, five assistant clerks, twenty-five stenographers, a chief process server, sixty-two assistants and fourteen messengers. The aggregate annual pay-roll is over \$600,000.

During the past six years, under a Tammany District Attorney, the greater part of this patronage has been divided among the district leaders affiliated with the Tammany "Organization," although there have been a few creditable exceptions of competent and satisfactory assistants.

The voters of the County of New York, without regard to party affiliations, should between now and election day anxiously consider whether they want the District Attorney's office and its staff of prosecutors for four years more to be largely affiliated with and controlled by Tammany influences, however innocuous the past professional career of any nominee for the office may seem to be.

We need and we want in the office of the District Attorney of New York County a competent, trained, scholarly lawyer, courageous and independent, above political pressure of any kind, who will enforce the law with singleness of purpose and without regard to persons or to politics. We want a man of firm and stern metal, who will unflinchingly and impartially protect the persons and property of our inhabitants; who will prosecute without fear or favor; who will oppress or intimidate no class; who will be a terror to law-breakers, as District Attorney Whitman was seven years ago, and who will give every accused a fair and prompt trial, and each his or her day in court before a just and competent judge so far as he can properly select the judge.

Such a competent, efficient, vigorous and trustworthy District Attorney your committee believes will be secured in John Kirkland Clark, who has been put in nomination for the office by the Republican Party. Forty-five years of age, educated at Yale College and the Harvard Law School, for twenty years a member of the bar of the State, he has had exceptional training for the office. He was one of District Attorney Whitman's able staff of assistants; he personally conducted a number of difficult and important prosecutions and investigations, and he has had a varied experience in civil as well as criminal practice. He served during the Great War as one

of the Government Appeal Agents in connection with the Federal Selective Service Law; he is a law lecturer at the Harvard Law School, and he was recently appointed by the Court of Appeals as one of the Board of Examiners for admission to the bar in this State because of his recognized legal scholarship and ability, and he is now acting as Chairman of that Board.

The citizens of this county can, in the judgment of your committee, implicitly rely upon Mr. Clark, if elected, to administer the office capably and impartially and solely in the public interest, and to give the county a prompt, effective, merciful and satisfactory administration of criminal justice.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEE.

In conclusion your committee submits, for the consideration and action of the Club, the following recommendations, which it has embodied in appropriate resolutions, viz.:

1. That the nominations at the instance of the Coalition Committee of Henry H. Curran, Charles C. Lockwood and Vincent Gilroy, respectively for the offices of Mayor, Comptroller and President of the Board of Aldermen of the Greater City of New York, be approved and endorsed by the Club.

2. That the nomination of John Kirkland Clark for the office of District Attorney of the County of New York be likewise approved and endorsed by the Club.

3. That the President of the Club be authorized forthwith to appoint a General Municipal Campaign Committee of such number of members of the Club as he shall deem advisable, and that this committee be charged

with the duty of coöperating on behalf of the Club with other organizations, of taking such steps as may tend in their judgment to secure the election of the candidates representing the Coalition movement for the reform and efficient, economical and honest administration of our municipal affairs, and of tendering to the managers of the Coalition Campaign the aid and assistance of this Club in any manner in which it can be made available and as may be found desirable or practicable, and with power to solicit contributions from among our members towards the necessary expenses of the present vitally important campaign.

4. That the Club endorse the nomination of Mr. Justice William S. Andrews for the office of Judge of the Court of Appeals, and that it urge the electorate to support him upon a non-partisan basis not only because of his long, satisfactory and superior judicial experience and his able services now for four and a half years in that court, but because the criticism directed at a competent, upright and fearless judge for the recent decision in the Bonus Law Case according to his conscience, involves an attack upon our whole judicial system of administering justice according to law and upon the independence and impartiality of our judges.
New York, October 6, 1921.

By order of

The Committee on Political Reform.

WILLIAM D. GUTHRIE, Chairman.

J. VAN VECHTEN OLCOTT, Secretary.

RESOLUTIONS.

RESOLVED that the Report of the Committee on Political Reform, dated October 6, 1921, be and it is hereby approved, and that it be printed and distributed among the members of the Club and the public as may be directed by said Committee.

RESOLVED FURTHER that the nominations at the instance of the Coalition Committee of Henry H. Curran, Charles C. Lockwood and Vincent Gilroy, respectively for the offices of Mayor, Comptroller and President of the Board of Aldermen of the Greater City of New York be and they are hereby approved and endorsed by the Club.

RESOLVED FURTHER that the nomination of John Kirkland Clark for the office of District Attorney of the County of New York be and it is hereby approved and endorsed by the Club.

RESOLVED FURTHER that the President of the Club be and he hereby is authorized forthwith to appoint a General Municipal Campaign Committee of such number of members of the Club as he shall deem advisable, and that said Committee be charged with the duty of coöperating with other organizations and taking such steps as may tend in their judgment to secure the election of the candidates representing the Coalition movement for the reform and efficient, economical and honest administration of our municipal affairs, and of tendering to the managers of the Coalition Campaign the aid and assistance of the Club in any manner in which it can be made available and as may be found desirable or practicable, and with power to solicit contributions from among the mem-

bers of the Club towards the necessary expenses of the campaign.

RESOLVED FURTHER that The Union League Club of New York endorse the nomination of Mr. Justice William S. Andrews for the office of Judge of the Court of Appeals, and that the Club urge upon the electorate that Judge Andrews be supported on a non-partisan basis not only because of his long, satisfactory and superior judicial experience and his service now for four and a half years in that court, but because the criticism directed at a competent, upright and fearless judge for the recent decision in the Bonus Law Case according to his conscience, involves an attack upon our whole judicial system of administering justice according to law and upon the independence and impartiality of our judges.

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